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NEWS RELEASE

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Memorial Day Marks the 70th Anniversary of the Vanport Flood; Commemorate this Historic Event at Local Programs and by Exploring Digital Content

PORTLAND, OR – May 23, 2018 – Once the second largest city in Oregon, Vanport was, during its short existence from 1942 to 1948, the nation’s largest wartime housing development, a site for social innovation, and a lightning rod for racial prejudice. On Memorial Day in 1948, the Columbia River, swirling fifteen feet above normal, punched a hole in a railroad embankment that served as a dike, starting a flood that would leave 18,000 people homeless and alter race relations in Portland forever.

On the 70th anniversary of this catastrophic flood, programs throughout Portland as well as a variety of rich digital content will give the community an opportunity to remember Vanport, once the second largest city in Oregon.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

[History Pub: “Memories of the Vanport Flood: A Panel Discussion”](#)

May 28 at 7pm | McMenamins Kennedy School

Join the Oregon Historical Society, McMenamins, and Holy Names Heritage Center for a free panel discussion with former Vanport residents Luanne Barnes, Belva Jean Griffin, Carolyn Hinton, and Janice Okamoto. This event is free and open to the public and space is limited; doors open at 6pm.

[Vanport Mosaic Festival](#)

May 23 – May 28

Join the [Vanport Mosaic](#) for six days of memory activism opportunities commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the Vanport Flood including live performances, tours, exhibits,

and community engagement initiatives. This multi-disciplinary event was awarded the Oregon Heritage Excellence Award 2017 and the Spirit of Portland Award by City Commissioner Nick Fish.

DIGITAL CONTENT

Just added to the Oregon Historical Society's Digital Collections are two collections of photographs of Vanport. [This first](#) features photographs taken by Vanport resident Dale Skovgaard and his family before and after the flood of 1948. These images are also in an article written by Skovgaard for the *Oregon Historical Quarterly* in 2007 on his memories of the flood, which is currently [available to read at ohs.org](#).

[The second](#) features aerial shots of the flood, ten of which were included in a commemorative postcard book, "[Vanport City, Ore. Destroyed by the Mighty Columbia River.](#)" They sold for fifty cents in a small white pocket envelope, which is also included on OHS Digital Collections.

For more information on the history of Vanport and the Vanport Flood, visit the Oregon Historical Society's digital history projects the [Oregon Encyclopedia](#) and the [Oregon History Project](#), or watch the OPB and OHS co-produced *Oregon Experience* documentary, "[Vanport](#)", which is available to view online.

About the Oregon Historical Society

For more than a century, the Oregon Historical Society has served as the state's collective memory, preserving a vast collection of artifacts, photographs, maps, manuscript materials, books, films, and oral histories. Our research library, museum, digital platforms & website (www.ohs.org), educational programming, and historical journal make Oregon's history open and accessible to all. We exist because history is powerful, and because a history as deep and rich as Oregon's cannot be contained within a single story or point of view.